

Louis Armstrong

Jazz Musician

American Music Series

Scott #2982 (name in white) & #2984 (name in black)

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Designed by Dean Mitchell

(2982 issued as single; 2984 issued as part of a se-tenant)

Louis "Satchmo" Armstrong was born in New Orleans, Louisiana on August 4, 1901. He grew up in abject poverty and worked odd jobs as a child. He was sent to the Colored Waif's Home as a juvenile delinquent in 1913 where he learned to play the cornet as part of the home's band. Louis learned and improved on his style by listening to the early jazz artists of the time. In 1918, Louis joined Kid Ory's Band and during the early 1920s he performed aboard the Mississippi riverboats.

In 1922, Louis moved to Chicago and played second cornet in King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band. Louis married the band's pianist, Lil Hardin in 1924. Together with Lil, he composed and recorded his first solos, Chimes Blues and Tears.

Lois quit the band in 1924 and moved to New York City where he played in the Fletcher Henderson Band. He returned to Chicago in 1925 and switched from cornet to trumpet. He recorded two of the all time jazz solo classics, Hot Five and Hot Seven during this time.

Louis also recorded the classic solos Hotter than That, Strutting with some Barbecue, Wild Man Blues and with pianist Earl Hines recorded West End Blues and Weather Bird.

By 1929 Louis was already one of the top musicians in the country. He moved to New York that year and played in the review Hot Chocolates. Louis and Lil separated in 1931. Starting in 1935, Louis toured Europe as a trumpet soloist for several bands.

Louis' extraordinary range on the trumpet and his talent for structuring bravura solos with high-note climaxes enthralled audiences the world over. He produced such masterpieces as Body and Soul and Stardust during this period. He added Scat Singing to his repertoire in 1927. (In Jazz - Singing in which the singer substitutes improvised nonsense syllables for the words of a song, and tries to sound and

phrase like a musical instrument.) His trademark gravel voice and white handkerchief will be identified with Satchmo for all time.

Joe Glaser became Louis' manager in 1935 and helped to guide his new film career. His first film was Pennies from Heaven in 1936. Louis's swing style of trumpet playing was a major influence on all of the jazz horn players who came after him. His music also influenced the styles of such jazz notables as Coleman Hawkins and Bud Freeman.

In 1947, Louis stared in the dramatic film, New Orleans. Following this film, Louis formed the Dixieland All-Stars and began almost non-stop tours. During this period, Louis recorded the hits, Mack the Knife and Hello Dolly. Louis' last film in 1969 was the musical, Hello Dolly.

Famous and renowned throughout the world, Louis had to endure Racism and Prejudice in the city where he was born and raised. African American performers before the 1970s, when traveling or performing in the south, had to stay in "Blacks Only" hotels, travel in the "Blacks Only" section of trains, drink from segregated water fountains and were treated as second class citizens. New Orleans belatedly honored it's native son in 2000 when the New Orleans International Airport was renamed the Louis Armstrong International Airport.

Louis "Satchmo" Armstrong died in New York City on July 6, 1971. An excellent autobiography of his early years, Satchmo: My Life in New Orleans (1954) is available at Amazon.com.

Sources:

Encyclopedia Britannica

Encyclopedia Africana

Atlanta Music Group (AMG)